SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL MILIEU

by

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During the past decade, students of international affairs have increasingly examined the role which perceptions play in foreign policy decisionmaking.[1] Perhaps not surprisingly, they have concluded that before one can understand a nation's foreign policy, one must first understand that nation's perceptions of other political systems.

A brief examination of American policy toward the Soviet Union supports this viewpoint. For example, Henry Kissinger's economic linkage strategy was at least in part designed to draw the Soviet Union into the international economic community to such a degree that the USSR would hesitate to undertake policies which might alienate its trading partners. More recently, President Carter's expressions of concern over human rights violations perpetrated by the Kremlin have regularly chilled Soviet-American relations. In both examples, American perceptions of the Soviet political system have affected US policy toward the USSR.

It is reasonable to assume that Soviet policy toward the US is similarly influenced by Soviet perceptions of the American political system. Western scholars, however, have rarely undertaken analysis of these Soviet perceptions.[2] This study seeks to add to that limited discussion.

THE TRADITIONAL SOVIET VIEW: THE FIRST 50 YEARS

Soviet attitudes toward the American political system are based on the Marxist-Leninist class view of history and politics. To the Marxist-Leninist, the political structure of a state serves the interests of the dominant socioeconomic class in the state. In the US, that class is the bourgeois capitalist class. Thus, the American political system exists to further the interests of the bourgeois capitalist class. The trappings of the American political system—elections, rule of law, political parties, and so forth—are consequently interpreted in one of two ways, either as subterfuges designed to deceive non-bourgeois elements of society, or as methods through which the bourgeois class settles its internal disputes.

Such a brief overview of the Marxist-Leninist attitude toward the relationship between government and society captures only the broadest framework of Soviet viewpoints on the US political system. Since the creation of the Soviet state in 1917, Soviet perceptions of the US political system have in fact undergone considerable alteration. Lenin appears to have had a two-pronged view of the US. In *Imperialism—The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin grouped the US with other imperialist powers of the day.[3] In "A Letter to American Workers," he was even more vituperative, condemning the "American billionaires" for "grabbing hundreds of billions of dollars" during World War I.[4] Lenin also clearly believed that the class struggle determined political relationships within the US. The entire US political process, to Lenin, reflected the fact

that the US Government served the interests of the bourgeoisie. Elections, for example, were derided as "a struggle for power between the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties which distribute and redistribute the spoils of office while the foundations of bourgeois society remain unchanged."[5]

It is equally evident that Lenin felt a certain respect for the US. This respect was not the result of any fondness Lenin had for the American politico-economic system, but resulted from Lenin's recognition of the US position in the capitalist world and the American revolutionary tradition. Lenin considered the US the

> foremost country of modern capitalism . . ., unequalled in rapidity of development of capitalism . . ., in the degree of political freedom and the cultural level of the masses of the people. Indeed, this country is in many respects the model and ideal of our bourgeois civilization.[6]

Lenin was as explicit in his respect for the American revolutionary tradition. In "A Letter to American Workers," he proclaimed the American Revolution "one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars" of history, and he considered the American Civil War to be of "immense world-historic, progressive, and revolutionary significance."[7]

Stalin followed Lenin's lead in this "approach-avoidance" attitude toward the US. Frederick Barghoorn's *The Soviet Image of the United States* presents a masterful picture of general Soviet attitudes toward the US during the Stalin years. The US was regularly vilified as a nation of open class repression, racism, inequality of opportunity, and imperialism; yet it was also viewed as the model of economic efficiency to which the Soviet Union aspired. Stalin himself illustrated similar ambivalence in a 1931 interview in which he praised American "businesslike cooperation in industry, technology, literature, and life," but quickly warned that he "never forgot that the United States was a capitalist country."[8]

No fundamental alteration in this two-pronged Soviet attitude toward the US occurred until the late Khrushchev period. From about 1959 on, Soviet authorities began to claim that they could detect a "sane," "realistic" segment of the American political leadership which favored "progressive" international policies such as arms control, an end to the cold war, and improved relations with the Soviet Union. Soviet spokesmen maintained that "sane" American politicians realized that peaceful coexistence was a necessity for the survival of both systems, and that these "sane" American politicians could in fact direct US foreign policy toward this new path of relations with the USSR. Using the rationale that both Kennedy and Johnson represented "sane" elements of the US bourgeoisie, Khrushchev argued that Soviet cooperation with these US politicians was in fact ideologically sound.

Soviet-American cooperation was soon to be curtailed because of the Vietnam issue. Nevertheless, many Soviet observers linked the escalating US involvement in Vietnam during 1964 to that year's presidential campaign. According to this view, Johnson, in order to undermine Goldwater's right-wing political support, was attempting to prove that he was not "soft on communism."[9] Even with this tendency to abandon "realism," however, Johnson was the preferred candidate in Soviet eyes. One post-election Soviet assessment even grudgingly acknowledged that the American electorate had been given a choice between two different foreign policies:

> For the first time, pre-election foreign policy declarations of Republicans and Democrats differed significantly from each other on a number of points, and in this way the American electorate received the possibility to make known its attitude on a major international problem—the problem of war and peace.[10]

Thus, by the end of 1964 Soviet views of the American political milieu incorporated the idea that the US Government acted apart

from narrowly conceived business and monopoly interests, and the Soviets recognized that there were in fact legitimate divergent policy opinions held by various American bourgeois politicians. At first blush these positions represented rather limited changes in the Soviet perspective. However, their impact was in fact considerable. They justified efforts by the Soviet Government to expand and improve relations with the US, and they provided a credible explanation for any turn of US policy.

THE BREZHNEV ERA: PRE-DETENTE PERCEPTIONS

By early 1965, Soviet perceptions of the American political scene had in many ways abandoned the traditional Marxist-Leninist view. However, escalating US involvement in Vietnam caused the Soviets to mute their allusions to the influence of the "sane" segments of the bourgeoisie. Most notable was the Soviet reassessment of Lyndon Johnson.

How did the Soviet media explain the apparent change in Johnson? The answer was simple: Johnson had masqueraded as a "sane" politician during the 1964 election, thereby succeeding in winning the support of the public, while he actually represented the interests of "big business."[11] By the end of 1965, Soviet leaders had readopted much of their traditional perspective on the relationship between the American Government and "big business." The government was once again viewed as representing the interests of a largely monolithic bourgeoisie which sought to embroil the US in a foreign conflict for the sake of profit.

During late 1965 and throughout 1966, Soviet commentary about the influence exerted by "realistic" American politicians on US policy all but vanished as congressional opposition to the war remained ineffective. For the time being, US policy was being determined by "right-wing extremists."[12] Even so, it should be stressed that Soviet observers were cognizant of domestic US sentiments opposing the war, and they expected those sentiments to have a significant effect on US foreign policy.[13]

Despite the return of many Soviet observers to their traditional perceptions, others argued that while policy was being determined by "right-wing elements" of the bourgeoisie, "realistic elements" still survived in Washington, particularly in the Senate. Even more startlingly, Soviet observers attached considerable importance to the effect that non-bourgeois elements of the American population would have on US policy in the near future. This was clearly a major departure from traditional Soviet assessments of the American political milieu. Indeed, while various Soviet commentators differed in their assessments of the relative strengths and cohesiveness of these various actors, few if any intimated that Lyndon Johnson and the right-wing bourgeois interests he allegedly represented could conduct policy with total disregard for the other elements of the American body politic. Indeed, it was to assuage these other elements that Johnson met with Kosygin at Glassboro in 1968, at least in the Soviet view.

Given this Soviet outlook, it was somewhat surprising that Soviet observers argued that the 1968 presidential election illustrated the control which the "reactionary elements" of the bourgeoisie had over the American Government and the American political

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process. The 1968 election itself was held in an "atmosphere of severe crisis in domestic and foreign policy, engendered by the sharp worsening of social and racial contradictions and the aggressive war in Vietnam," as one Soviet newspaper put it.[14] To the Soviets, the differences between Humphrey and Nixon were "hard to detect even with a magnifying glass."[15]

What had happened to those segments of the American population which the USSR had earlier viewed as having future influence? Why had they not played a more prominent role in the election? The Soviets saw two primary reasons. First, right-wing dominance in both political parties had prevented a "realistic" candidate such as Eugene McCarthy from obtaining the nomination; thus, progressive elements in the US electorate had no one to support and were effectively excluded from participation. Second, the American anti-war movement, composed primarily of students during 1967 and 1968, was not sufficiently conscious of the class nature of the struggle it was waging. Indeed, the very heterogeneity of the class composition of the American student movement forced it to adopt diverse ideological views, thereby making it easier for the "ruling clique" to neutralize.[16] This diversity reduced the political effectiveness of the anti-war movement, permitted the right-wing politicians to dominate the nominating conventions, and gave the election to Richard Nixon.

Nixon himself presented a problem to Soviet leaders. His efforts to present himself as a "new Nixon" were viewed by most Soviet commentators as "political maneuvers designed to attract votes."[17] Nevertheless, as the Republican candidate continued to stress that it was time to move American policy from confrontation to negotiation, Soviet assessments of him softened noticeably.

Given this Soviet uncertainty as to which Nixon was the "real" Nixon, it was not surprising that the Soviet leadership adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the new President during his first several months in office. During this period, Nixon relinquished insistence on American strategic superiority, opened a dialogue on international issues with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, and continued to stress his desire for Soviet-American negotiations. These and other conciliatory gestures clearly had an effect on Soviet perceptions. In an address to the June 1969 Congress of International Communist Parties, no less a person than Brezhnev himself commented on "new moderating forces" which had appeared in American ruling circles.[18]

This did not imply, however, that the Soviet leadership had totally accepted the "new Nixon" as reality. Having been forced to alter their views on Nixon's predecessor, Soviet spokesmen were cautious in categorizing the next American president. The Soviet reaction to Nixon's 1970 "State of the World Message" reflected this caution, pointing to a degree of confusion as to whether Nixon was "sane" or "insane," "realistic" or "unrealistic." One Soviet analyst observed that Nixon's message indicated that "America's present leaders have begun to think seriously about the limits and possibilities of their global policy,"[19] while another argued that Nixon's speech left "no doubt that military strength continues to be the basis of US policy."[20]

Although Soviet leaders remained uncertain about what view to adopt about the American President, they harbored no doubts as to the sentiments of the American masses. On both foreign and domestic issues, the Soviet media maintained, Americans wanted to reassess old policies and myths.[21] Nixon was viewed by the Soviets as being caught between two countervailing forces. On the one hand, "rabid elements" of the military-industrial complex, the CIA, and monopoly capitalism pressured Nixon to maintain old foreign and domestic policy directions. On the other hand, the "toiling strata," joined by students and limited numbers of the "realistic" wing of the bourgeoisie, pressured Nixon to liberalize.

The American incursion into Cambodia in April 1970 sent a clear signal to Soviet American-affairs analysts about which side was winning the perceived struggle to

influence the American President. However, even though Nixon had temporarily yielded to right-wing elements of the ruling class, Soviet commentators refused to acknowledge that he could ignore continuing public opposition. Indeed, following the Cambodian incursion, the Soviet media increasingly remarked that the flip-flops of US foreign policy were direct results of conflicting domestic political pressures on Nixon. His willingness to adopt a reactionary foreign policy was tempered by his cognizance that a hard-line foreign policy would evoke domestic opposition. As Brezhnev stated in his speech to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, "Relations with the United States are complicated by the frequent zig-zags in American foreign policy, which are evidently connected with some expedient domestic policy maneuvers."[22] This linkage of foreign policy and domestic political pressures also explained, to the Soviets' satisfaction, the methods through which Nixon chose to implement his foreign policy. Rapid and extreme maneuvers such as the Cambodian incursion and later the mining of Haiphong harbor proved that Nixon sought to mollify the right wing; rapid withdrawals were designed to minimize the time that domestic opposition had to organize.

The only major exception to this Soviet practice of interpreting the "zig-zags" of American foreign policy in light of the exigencies of domestic American politics concerned the Sino-American rapprochement. For the most part, Soviet sources remained reticent about the domestic US political factors which led to the rapprochement. It was clear, however, that the Soviets did not view the new development with equanimity. Numerous Soviet sources argued that improved Sino-American relations meant that neither nation had "critically reassessed" its foreign policy, with one author proclaiming that it was erroneous to consider the normalization of Sino-American relations as an indication of "realism on the part of the United States."[23] Therefore, despite the immense impact which Nixon's China gambit had on Soviet assessments of the international politico-military arena, the normalization of Sino-American relations had almost no impact on prevailing Soviet perceptions of the American political system, or of Richard Nixon.

DETENTE AND THE WATERGATE EVOLUTION

Nixon's May 1972 trip to the Soviet Union and the signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty marked the beginning of a major shift in Soviet perceptions of the US political system and the incumbent President. Whereas Nixon had previously played the consummate politician in his efforts to appease the entire political spectrum, following his trip, Soviet commentary clearly cast him as a "realist." Whereas Nixon previously took into consideration the concerns of "Goldwater Republicans in the Senate," the CIA, and the military-industrial complex when formulating policy, his journey to the USSR and the signing of SALT I indicated to Soviet observers that the White House could now set policy without bending to the desires of the reactionary segments of government. Nixon had acquired a new authority and had abandoned his previous "zig-zag" policy.

Two factors had forced him to abandon the old policy, the Kremlin believed. First, "domestic dissatisfaction" with "adventurous policies" had been growing. Thus, the long-standing Soviet prediction that domestic opposition would prevail was finally justified. Second, the "changing international correlation of forces," specifically the Soviet attainment of strategic parity, had led Nixon to complete his political conversion. It was this conversion that gave him (and the presidency) additional authority, at least as far as the Soviets were concerned.

These changes did not indicate that the opponents of "realistic" policies finally had been defeated. Rather, because of Nixon's conversion, the increased centralization of power in the hands of the President, and the growing strength of "realistic" elements of society, the "forces of reaction" had been

temporarily eclipsed. To the Soviets, there was still the possibility that they could emerge revitalized. Thus, throughout 1972 and early 1973, Soviet leaders and media appealed to Americans to make detente "irreversible." It is only in light of these Soviet hopes and fears that Soviet interpretations of the Watergate affair can be understood.

Put simply, Watergate was interpreted by Soviet analysts as the product of a domestic struggle for power pitting opponents of detente against the architect of detente, and Democrats against Republicans. In the early stages of the Watergate affair, the Soviet media dismissed it as a relatively minor matter. Not until the fall of 1973 did the Soviet media begin to discuss the possibility of Nixon's impeachment.[24] As Nixon's troubles mounted during 1974, the Soviet media claimed that Nixon's difficulties were caused by the Democratic opposition and anti-detente forces. One Soviet publication argued that the scandal was only a single manifestation of an "acute domestic political struggle" between a Democratic Congress and a Republican White House.[25] Anti-detente forces were also heavily criticized.[26]

Nixon's resignation put Soviet observers of American affairs in a quandary. Given Soviet interpretations of what caused Watergate, it was evident that either anti-detente forces had strengthened their position or the independence of the American presidency had been restricted, or both. Uncertainty again reigned in Soviet perceptions of the American political milieu.[27]

THE COMPLEXITIES OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Since 1974, to Soviet eyes, the American political milieu has defied explanation either in terms of the traditional Marxist-Leninist outlook or in terms of the more sophisticated Khrushchevian and post-Khrushchevian outlooks. Current Soviet perceptions of the American political scene are in some instances so complex (and, indeed, accurate!) that it may even be argued that the concept of class is occasionally overlooked.

The development of this recent Soviet perspective on American political affairs has been gradual, necessitated by the Soviet effort to explain congressional behavior, presidential policy, and popular attitudes in the aftermath of Watergate. The collapse of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975 provided one of the first opportunities for Soviet analysts to assess these new American political factors. As it became evident that South Vietnam was in serious jeopardy, President Ford, by this time accepted by the Soviets as an ardent supporter of detente, argued long and hard that additional American aid should be extended to America's beleaguered ally. Not surprisingly, the Soviet press severely castigated this position. Congress, on the other hand, which had only recently added the Jackson Amendment to the Soviet-American trade bill and had made clear its strong opposition to the Vladivostok Accord, opposed additional aid to Vietnam. Again not surprisingly, the Soviet media lauded this congressional opposition. The only consistent segment of the American body politic, at least in Soviet eyes, was the "broad portion of the American public" that allegedly supported detente and the Vladivostok Accord and opposed the Jackson Amendment and the extension of additional aid to South Vietnam.[28]

While the public's positions were of course logical as judged by past Soviet viewpoints, how could Soviet observers now rationalize the seeming reversal of roles of both Congress and the President? In the case of Ford, the rationalization was easy. The new President, unsure of his hold on power, was bending first to the pressure of reactionary elements and then to the pressure of realistic elements, much the way Nixon had during his first three years in office. The Soviet rationalization of the reversal of Congress was more complex. While all of Congress still sought to protect the bourgeois class interests, there were differing views within Congress on how best to do that. This accounted for some of the apparent congressional role reversal. Such an interpretation admitted that congressmen could move from "realistic" to "unrealistic" positions on an issue-by-issue basis. Other

congressmen, particularly those in their first term, had not yet secured necessary support from business interests, the military, and other special interest groups; they therefore found it requisite, at least until such support could be secured, to follow the public's will. This second interpretation permitted one to argue that non-bourgeois interests were in fact being represented in Congress, at least temporarily.

This stage of perception lasted until the 1976 presidential campaign began. Soviet analysis of the campaign itself presented a level of sophistication and complexity previously not seen in Soviet commentary on American politics.[29] The several candidates during the early stages of the primaries were individually assessed. Fred Harris, for instance, was approvingly regarded as a coalition-leader of "the poor, workers, and farmers"—a leader who even embraced the "class struggle." Jimmy Carter was described as an "outsider" who "calls himself the voice of a new age."[30] Only one Democratic candidate, Henry Jackson, was consistently criticized. To the Soviets, Jackson was a force to be reckoned with in American politics since his supporters included "the three leviathans, oil, aircraft, and Zionism."[31]

Among the Republican candidates, Ronald Reagan was considered little more than "a henchman of the extreme right" whose speeches were "astonishing in their primitiveness and incompetence."[32] Ford's policy toward the Soviet Union and detente made the incumbent President the implicitly preferred candidate, even though Soviet observers complained about his willingness to bend to pressures from the right.

As the primary elections went on, Soviet attitudes toward the individual candidates altered considerably in concert with their rising and falling fortunes. These permutations forced Soviet observers to break away from old categorizations of politicians as "realistic," "unrealistic," or pliable. The Soviets found it necessary to delineate liberal, centrist, and conservative wings in each party. In the Democratic Party, Jackson and Wallace were described as conservative, Carter as centrist, and Morris Udall, Birch Bayh, and Sargent Shriver as liberal. In the Republican Party, Reagan, Ford, and Nelson Rockefeller, respectively, led the three wings.

The recognition of party wings was a significant step forward in Soviet analysis of American politics. Of equal moment was the insight that certain candidates, such as Henry Jackson, were "conservative on foreign policy questions and liberal on domestic policy problems."[33] Politicians who adopted such stances were looked upon as seeking to win enough support across the political spectrum to assure their victory.

Jimmy Carter was viewed as taking yet another tack in his effort to secure the presidency. Soviet observers believed that Carter, rather than adopting conservative stances on some issues and liberal stances on others, sought to obfuscate his position on all issues. Carter's victory in the Florida primary, for instance, was attributed to the fact that he had not "clearly defined his program, thereby enabling the voter to interpret it according to his own taste."[34]

These new analytical complexities served admirably to explain the changing fates of the candidates in the primary elections. The Ford-Reagan rivalry provided an excellent case in point. During the New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Vermont primaries, Ford's victories were attributed to his continued support for detente. The incumbent's fourth consecutive victory, in Florida, was read to mean that southerners also supported detente. Ford's victory in the Republican primary season was therefore "almost guaranteed."[35] After Ford in Illinois notched his fifth victory in as many tries, *New Times* (Moscow), again attributing the win to Ford's detente policy, went so far as to declare, "Reagan has been beaten."[36]

Reagan's victory in North Carolina was a "major surprise," *Pravda* admitted, but the Soviets attached little significance to it.[37] However, Reagan's North Carolina win was followed by victories in Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, and Nebraska. After Reagan's overwhelming victory in Texas—

itself attributed by some Soviet commentators to the Republican's success in attracting conservative Democratic voters—Soviet coverage of both the campaigns and the candidates changed noticeably. Results of the primaries, which were previously reported with some Soviet editorial comment, were now regularly reported in a straightforward way with limited interpretation. Furthermore, the Soviet media curtailed personal criticism of Reagan.

What accounted for Reagan's sudden surge in popularity? Two factors, the Soviets concluded, were most important. First, Ford had blundered by making "concessions to the right." When Ford abandoned use of the term "detente" before the Florida primary, the Soviets pooh-poohed his action as representing merely the impoverishment of "the American vocabulary, not real life."[38] With Reagan's rally, however, the Soviets discarded this view. Ford's rejection of "detente" had in fact "cut deeply into his support," the Kremlin's observers concluded.[39] The American electorate resented Ford's action, therefore refusing to support him. Second, Jackson's withdrawal from the race following his defeat in Pennsylvania, and the continuing inability of Wallace to attract voters, had forced conservative "forces of reaction and militarism" to coalesce behind Reagan.[40] Reagan was therefore strengthened even as Ford was weakened.

To the Soviets, the outcome of the general election itself was greatly influenced by the candidates' attitudes toward detente. Ford eventually lost, the Soviets argued, because of his willingness to "bend to the right." Carter similarly had "bent to the right," thereby dissipating his huge August lead. The eventual margin of victory was provided by Carter's reputation as an honest man, his position as a political outsider, his skill as a politician, his vagueness on policy, and his support from influential business and political circles.

SOVIET ASSESSMENTS IN THE CARTER YEARS

The changing balance of political forces and alliances that so complicated the Soviet analysis of the 1976 election has continued to plague Soviet assessments of the American political milieu since then. Nonetheless, even in the months immediately after Carter took office, the Kremlin commented extensively on the forces it saw influencing the new administration. "Reactionary circles" still sought to undermine detente with the short-range goals of pressuring Carter into adopting a hard line with the Kremlin and winning Carter's support for increased military spending.[41] Led by the "infamous military-industrial complex," the "reactionaries" sought to accomplish both goals by claiming that the Soviet Union infringed human rights and posed a military threat to the West. That Carter adopted a human rights campaign and eventually came to support increased military spending was ample proof, to the Soviets, that the "reactionary" element of US politics was still powerful and that Carter was a pliable President. Significantly, Soviet commentators have not categorized Carter as a "realistic" or "unrealistic" President, nor as a member of the liberal or the conservative wing of the Democratic Party, but rather as a member of a third—the moderate or "indecisive" wing.

Soviet Politburo member and KGB head Yuri Andropov gave perhaps the clearest statement of this perspective of Carter during a speech in Petrozavask on 5 August 1978. Andropov's taxonomy included the "hawks," who seek to place the world "in the grip of a dangerous East-West confrontation and return it to the trenches of the Cold War"; the "realists," who "proceed from the premise that with the present correlation of forces in the world arena there is no acceptable choice other than detente"; and the "undecided" group, into which Carter himself apparently fits. This third group, according to Andropov, is:

> . . . aware in general of the catastrophic consequences of a global thermonuclear war. They are even willing to reach limited agreements reducing international tension. But they are fearful of changes which detente brings in international and domestic

affairs. Therefore, there is instability and hesitation in policy, an increasing gap between words and deeds, the desire to appease the right-wing, and to make concessions to overtly militaristic and highly reactionary forces.[42]

Andropov again referred to the zig-zags of Carter's policies during his election speech on 22 February 1979.[43] Gromyko also deplored Washington's policy shifts at that time, noting that changes occur "as quickly as the weather in the North Atlantic changes."[44] In both cases, the speakers implied that the changes were the result of various domestic pressures.

These pressures emanate not only from the historical centers of bourgeois power ("big business" and the military), or from the expanding centers of "progressive" influence (minorities, labor, and students), or from Congress (still seen by the Soviets as an effective check on the exercise of presidential power). In addition to the foregoing centers of power, the Soviet media have identified two centers within the group of presidential advisors: one headed by National Security Advisor Brzezinski, which favors a hard line toward the Soviet Union; and one headed by Secretary of State Vance, which favors a more conciliatory policy. Carter is buffeted by conflicting advice from these two groups, the Soviets maintain, with the result that his policies follow an even more erratic course than they otherwise would.[45]

Soviet commentators have been curiously reticent about the American public's role in influencing Carter's policies. On occasion, they do observe that Carter must take into account the reaction of the people as he implements policy, but more often than not, Soviet analysts make no specific reference to the public's role other than to note that it is disenchanted with politics as a whole.

It is in light of these evolving views, then, that the Soviet view of US reaction to both the takeover of the US Embassy in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan may best be understood. To the Soviets, American "reactionary" elements succeeded in finding a *cause célèbre* in Iran behind which they could misrepresent the actual situation. This situation, it was argued in the Soviet media, was in reality the product of long-term US meddling in internal Iranian affairs. Carter's various reactions to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in turn were pointed to as additional proof that American reactionaries were again moving to the front of US political life and that Carter himself was a weak President who would bend with the prevailing political wind.[46] Soviet coverage of the early 1980 presidential primary elections has been correspondingly fatalistic, with some of the Soviet media even predicting the "Neanderthal" Reagan and the "pliable" Carter will be the eventual candidates for their respective parties. Even so, however, it should be noted that most Soviet analysts caution that the US political scene remains volatile, and that there is no certainty of either the Reagan or Carter nomination until the national conventions meet. Thus, American "reaction," while strengthened, is not conceded inevitable superiority within even the relatively short time span of a few months. This in itself is a considerable change in the Soviet perception of the US political scene.

What, if anything, may be concluded about Soviet perceptions of the American political milieu? Perhaps the most evident fact is that over the past several years, and particularly since 1974, Soviet analysis of American politics has taken on considerable sophistication, providing, despite its Marxist-Leninist vestigia, a generally accurate portrayal of American politics. Indeed, in many cases it is difficult to distinguish contemporary Soviet analysis from that in the West.

This new realism has undoubtedly given Soviet policymakers, assuming they are privy to the viewpoints being expressed by their Americanists, an enhanced level of understanding of the forces and factors which determine US policy. This understanding clearly provides a more accurate frame of reference in which Soviet policymakers can make decisions. Thus, it is probable that Soviet policymakers are no longer saddled with simplistic and doctrinaire notions of how and why their opposite numbers in the

United States operate. Given this probability, issues critical to Soviet-American relations should be examined on the basis of their individual merits, not out of fear that the men in the Kremlin do not understand how the American political process works.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970); Joseph H. de Rivera, *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy* (Columbus: Merril, 1968); and John G. Stoessinger, *Nations in Darkness: China, Russia & America* (New York: Random House, 1975).

2. For some of the leading examples of analysis which has been done, see Frederick Barghoorn, *The Soviet Image of the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950); Alexander Dallin, "Russia and China View the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 349 (September 1963), 154-62; Stephen P. Gilbert, *Soviet Images of America* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1977); Roger Hamburg, "Soviet Perceptions of Detente and Analysis of the American Political Process," *Naval War College Review*, 27 (May-June 1975), 24-42; Robert W. Hansen, "Recent Conflicts in Soviet Images of American Foreign Policy: Approaching the 1972 Summit," unpublished paper presented to the International Studies Association Conference, St. Louis, March 1977; and Morton Schwartz, *Soviet Perceptions of the United States* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978).

3. V. I. Lenin, "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism," *Selected Works of Lenin*, (New York: International Publishers, 1960), V, 9, 43, 69, 88, 109.

4. Lenin, *A Letter to American Workers* (originally published in *Pravda*, 22 August 1918) (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1952), pp. 8-9.

5. The United States electoral process was grouped in this discussion with those of France, Switzerland, England, Germany, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. See Lenin, "The State and Revolution," *Selected Works of Lenin*, VII, 31.

6. Lenin, "New Data on the Laws of Development of Capitalism in Agriculture: Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America," *Selected Works of Lenin*, XII, 190.

7. Lenin, *A Letter to American Workers*, pp. 5-6, 18.

8. Barghoorn, p. 27.

9. See, e.g., *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 28 June 1964, and *Pravda*, 7 August 1964.

10. Iu. Shvedkov, "A New Start," *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn'*, No. 1 (January 1965), 43-44.

11. A. Sovetov, "The Aggressive Policy of U.S. Imperialism," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 9 (September 1965), 67; and A. Sovetov, "The Soviet Union and Present International Relations," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 1 (January 1966), 309. "A. Sovetov" is the pseudonym for an unknown senior Soviet decisionmaker, probably a Politburo member.

12. "Current Problems of World Politics," *Mirovaia Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia*, No. 10 (October 1964), p. 76.

13. See, e.g., Moscow Domestic Service, 1300 GMT, 28 November 1965, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Daily Report (Soviet Union)* [hereafter *FBIS*], 30 November 1965, p. BB 13; and Vladivostok Domestic Service, 0300 GMT, 1 December 1965, in *FBIS*, 2 December 1965, p. BB 4.

14. *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1968.

15. *Izvestiia*, 5 September 1968.

16. V. Matveev, "Aggression in Vietnam and American Society," *SShA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiia*, No. 2 (February 1970), trans. by US Joint Publications Research Service, JPRS No. 50218, pp. 52-56.

17. Moscow Domestic Service, 1800 GMT, 11 August 1968, in *FBIS*, 12 August 1968, p. A 11.

18. TASS news release, 7 June 1969, in *FBIS*, 9 June 1969, p. A 65.

19. Moscow Domestic Service, 2000 GMT, 23 February 1970, in *FBIS*, 24 February 1970, p. A 2.

20. A. Zimin, "Washington: Political Declarations and Realities," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 8 (August 1970), 69.

21. See, e.g. Yu. Shvedkov, "Books on American Foreign Policy Reviewed," *SShA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiia*, No. 9 (September 1970), trans. by US Joint Publications Research Service, JPRS No. 51667, p. 128; and V. S. Rogov, "U.S. Striking Movement Assessed," *SShA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiia*, No. 3 (March 1970), trans. by US Joint Publications Research Service, JPRS No. 50391, pp. 72-75.

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23. A. Topornin, "Balance of Power Doctrine and Washington," *SShA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiia*, No. 11 (November 1971), 8-20; *Pravda*, 25 July 1971; and *Izvestiia*, 29 July 1971.

24. "The Watergate Affair," *New Times* (Moscow), No. 43 (October 1973), 9.

25. *Za Rubezhom*, No. 34 (August 1974), 4.

26. *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 14 August 1974.

27. *Za Rubezhom*, No. 32 (August 1974), 9-10.

28. See G. Trofimenko, "From Confrontation to Coexistence," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 10 (October 1975), 33-41; I. Romanov, "Instructive Lessons," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 9 (September 1975), 122-24; and M. Kudrin, "Objective Factors of Detente," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 3 (March 1975), 52-57.

29. For a detailed analysis of the Soviet perception of the 1976 presidential election, consult Daniel S. Papp, "The 1976 Presidential Election: The Soviet View," unpublished paper available from author.

30. *Izvestiia*, 18 January 1976.

31. *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 11 March 1976.

32. Moscow television broadcast, 16 February 1976; see also *Izvestiia*, 22 February 1976.

33. V. Zolotykhin, "On the Path toward the White House," *SShA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiia*, No. 6 (June 1976), 22-23.

34. *Izvestiia*, 13 March 1976.

35. *Ibid*.

36. I. Andronov, "At the Distant Approaches to the White House," *New Times* (Moscow), No. 12 (March 1976), 11.

37. *Pravda*, 25 March 1976.

38. "Detente Benefits All," *New Times* (Moscow), No. 42 (October 1976), 1.

39. I. Andronov, "Three Bids for the White House," *New Times* (Moscow), No. 25 (June 1976), 8.

40. *Za Rubezhom*, No. 21 (May 1976); and *Moskovskaia Pravda*, 13 June 1976.

41. *Pravda*, 20 January 1977; and *Izvestiia*, 25 February 1977.

42. *Pravda*, 6 August 1978.

43. *Izvestiia*, 23 February 1979.

44. *Pravda*, 27 February 1979.

45. *Pravda*, 24 July 1978; and *Izvestiia*, 3 August 1978 and 4 August 1978.

46. For a recent treatment of Soviet perceptions of the US response to events in Afghanistan, see Craig R. Whitney, "The View from the Kremlin," *New York Times Magazine*, 20 April 1980, pp. 30-33, 91-92.